



Senator Sheila Kuehl

23rd District Newsletter • July 2006

Governor Signs Kuehl Legislation Strengthening Protections for Women

Two additional bills are awaiting further legislative action

by Tam Ma, Policy Consultant

Senator Kuehl has introduced four bills in the current legislative session that address issues relating to violence against women. Two of these bills, SB 1402 and SB 1491, were signed by Governor Schwarzenegger in June. SB 1569 and SB 1745 are awaiting further legislative action.

SB 1402 - Spousal Rape

SB 1402, sponsored by the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, will ensure that all victims of rape are afforded equal protection under the law by eliminating a current additional reporting requirement imposed only on victims of marital rape.

Prior to the late 1970s, spouses were not allowed to bring charges of sexual assault against their spouse, and most states did not consider spousal rape a crime. Today, rape of a spouse is a crime in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. While the Legislature has enacted a series of bills that remove most distinctions between rape and marital rape, the statutes still diverge substantively in one crucial respect: reporting requirements.

Under California's marital rape statute, in addition to reporting to prosecutorial authorities or law enforcement within a six year statute of limitations, as all rape victims are required to do, a victim of rape by a spouse

must also report the rape to a qualified third party within one year of the violation. This additional reporting requirement does not apply if the victim's allegation is "corroborated" by independent evidence that would be admissible during trial. The legislature long ago decided that "corroboration" of rape, an often very private crime, is difficult or impossible in most cases, and, therefore, California's current rape statute, with the exception of marital rape, contains no such requirement. Both statutes carry a statute of limitations of six years, but the reporting requirement under the marital rape statute effectively diminishes the limit to one year for marital rape.

California is one of the few remaining states to impose a reporting requirement for spousal rape. By deleting this reporting requirement for spousal rape, SB 1402 will help rape victims in their efforts to pursue the prosecution of their abusers.

SB 1402 passed both houses of the Legislature and was signed by the Governor.

SB 1491 - Victim Confidentiality

SB 1491, sponsored by the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office, would prohibit entities that award or distribute grants to agencies that provide services to domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking victims from requesting or requiring such providers to disclose personally identifying information about their clients as a condition of receiving the grant.

Batterers, stalkers and other assailants are often relentless in their attempts to locate their victims. Studies have shown that individuals can often be located by the release of limited information, including gender and place and date of birth. It is not surprising, then, that in at least one instance in Los Angeles county, a grant provider's release of personally identifying information allowed a batterer to locate his victim even though she was receiving services at a confidential location. Assailants also often engage in increasingly violent conduct when their victims attempt to seek help.

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Share the Road

by Laurie Newman, Senior Field Deputy

Recently, Caltrans installed 18 "Share the Road" signs to improve the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians on Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) between Chautauqua and Decker Canyon. To celebrate the installations, Senator Kuehl, Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Caltrans and lots of cyclists attended a news conference on Friday, June 23rd.

Thought many don't realize it, PCH is an official state bicycle route, which means that cyclists have as much legal right to safe usage of the roadway as motorists. It's a fact, however, that the physical constraints of PCH tend to continuously compromise the safety of cyclists. And there are lots of cyclists on PCH, especially during the summer. Along with being an official state bicycle route, PCH has different meanings and purposes for different people. For residents of Malibu, it is their main street. For visitors, it is an amazing, scenic coastal highway. For many of us, it is how we get to and from work and play.

Important reminder to all who reside in the 310 area code

Beginning July 26, 2006, if you have a phone number in the 310 Area Code, you will be **required always** to dial the area code when dialing **all** calls, including those in the 310 Area Code. In addition, all automatic dialing and other pre-programmed equipment such as alarm and security systems, fax machines, internet dial-up numbers, and security entrances, must be re-programmed or they won't work.

In August of last year, citing a need for more phone numbers within the 310 geographic area, the California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) approved an area code overlay for the 310 area code. As many of you know, this discussion had been going on for years.

In the near future, new phone numbers within the 310 geographic area will have a 424 area code. Since two area codes will now serve the same region, the area code must be dialed when placing **all** calls.

If you live in a security building, please make sure that your landlord or condo association has made changes to your existing automatic dialing program or purchased a new entry system before July 26 so that visitors will not have difficulty entering your building.



Senator Kuehl, Supervisor Yaroslavsky, Caltrans Representatives and members of the cycling community pose with a new 'Share the Road' sign on Pacific Coast Highway.

The PCH Task Force, first convened in 1998, met in October of last year, a month after 2 cyclists, Scott Bleifer and Stanislav Ionov, were killed on PCH. After being approached by members of the cycling community with a number of ideas for improving safety on PCH, we decided to convene a series of PCH Task Force meetings in order to concentrate on bicycle safety issues.

Many meetings later, the Task Force completed their recommendations on ways that PCH may be made safer for bicyclists as well as motorists. In addition to the adoption of new signage, Caltrans has also put a number of new permitting procedures in place as part of a public safety campaign. Even though cyclists are allowed by law to cycle in the lanes of traffic, in reality, the physical uniqueness of PCH keeps most cyclists riding on the shoulders.

Consequently, the new permitting procedures now require Caltrans always to consider the safety of cyclists when issuing a construction permit for work along PCH. If k-rails need to be installed, they must be as far away from the fog line as possible. It is always the goal to give cyclists a width of 4 feet but if the shoulder must be reduced further, advisory signage must be placed appropriately so that cyclists and motorists have plenty of warning when shoulders are altered.

PCH is now a bit safer thanks to the dedication of many PCH Task Force members. I especially want to thank the members of the cycling community who have put in countless hours towards making PCH safer. The work continues on an informational campaign that will educate users of the roadway. Summer is here and the beach and PCH are crowded; please remember to drive safely and Share the Road. ❖

SB 840 (Kuehl) - Health Insurance for All Californians

By Sara Rogers, Health Consultant

SB 840, the California Health Insurance Reliability Act, is California's plan to establish a system of health insurance that would cover all the residents of the state with comprehensive benefits, stabilize growth in health care spending, improve the quality of care and guarantee the right of every Californian to choose his or her own physician.

Universal health care is possible. Polls are showing that 60% of Californians now support a publicly funded universal health care system over the current system. The conversation is steering away from *whether* we need to enact such a system and toward a discussion of *how* we will do so. SB 840, the California Health Insurance Reliability Act, is an important step forward in this ongoing discussion because it realistically begins to answer the how.

SB 840 works by pooling our health care resources so that everyone – state and federal government, income earners and employers - contributes something and we all get coverage. This allows us to consolidate the administrative functions of thousands of different insurance companies and plans into one comprehensive insurance plan, saving businesses and consumers, as well as the state, billions of dollars in the first year alone.

We are spending a total of over \$184 billion dollars on health care this year in California. That's more than twice as much as nearly every other industrialized nation - per capita. Yet, all other industrialized nations have achieved universal health insurance, and so can we.

So there is some good news. \$184 billion dollars is plenty of money to ensure reliable health care for all of California's 36 million residents.

Up until now we've failed to achieve meaningful reform, not because we lack the will, but because everyone is focused on getting someone else to pay. Proposals for individual mandates, employer mandates, and consumer driven health care each fail to solve the health care crisis because all of them simply bicker about who will pay for these increases in spending.

Yet, as our system crumbles, insurance companies are making record profits - even paying executive bonuses large enough to make a serious dent in California's budget deficit.

It's easy to see why insurance companies are doing so well. Our system allows insurers to cherry pick profitable patients – the healthy and the wealthy – while government covers the tab for seniors, the disabled and the poor; and then we wonder why our public programs are under-funded.

Now is the time for action. SB 840 is currently in the Assembly Rules Committee awaiting assignment to its next committee. Assembly Appropriations Committee is expected to be our next stop, and we are calling all hands on deck to begin the work to ensure passage in that committee and on the Assembly floor.

SB 840 is supported by nearly 500 organizations, a dozen of which have made passage of the bill this year

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On June 15th, at the 57th Annual Installation Dinner of the Pacific Palisades Chamber of Commerce, Laurie Newman, Senior Deputy to Senator Kuehl, presented a certificate to Steve Guttenberg for his four years of service to the community as Honorary Mayor of Pacific Palisades. The new Honorary Mayor of the Palisades is Gavin MacLeod. Laurie also welcomed Roy Robbins, the incoming president of the Chamber's Board and presented a certificate to Sandy Eddy, the outgoing president.

The Legislative LGBT Caucus Recognizes Pride Month

By Jonathan Snowden, Legislative Aide

Each year, in the month of June, millions of people in the United States and all over the world celebrate LGBT Pride Month, commemorating the anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion that galvanized the modern LGBT civil rights movement. Pride Month is an occasion to recognize the accomplishments and contributions of LGBT people in every field of endeavor, and to reinforce the importance of visibility in gaining acceptance and equal rights for gay and lesbian people.

The California State Legislature has marked the occasion for the last five years with a Pride Exhibit in the Capitol second floor rotunda, sponsored

jointly by the Senate President pro Tem, the Assembly Speaker, and the Legislative LGBT Caucus. Believed to be the first of its kind in any state capitol in the country, the exhibit displays a timeline of events in LGBT history, honors the memory of notable LGBT Californians, and features members of the Legislative LGBT Caucus, itself a group of historic import.

The California Legislative LGBT Caucus made history when it was created in 2002, becoming the first formally recognized caucus of its type in a state legislature. The original roster included Senator Kuehl, the first openly gay person elected to the California Legislature, as well as three openly lesbian Assemblymembers: Chris Kehoe (D- San Diego), Carole Migden (D- San Francisco), and Jackie Goldberg (D- Los Angeles). The caucus was formed to provide a forum for discussion of LGBT issues, to develop strategies for addressing the issues germane to California's LGBT community, and to advocate for LGBT-friendly bills in the Legislature. Though membership has changed over the years (gaining Assemblymembers Mark Leno (D- San Francisco) and John Laird (D- Santa Cruz) in 2002), the Legislative LGBT Caucus's core purpose has remained the same as the group has gained more recognition.

Monthly meetings allow the members of the Legislative LGBT Caucus to catch up and to discuss their legislative priorities. Through these meetings, the caucus mem-

bers identify legislation that is relevant to LGBT Californians and establish a list of priority bills. This year, that list includes three bills authored by Senator Kuehl: SB 1437 (the Bias-Free Curriculum Act, which mandates an LGBT-inclusive and bias-free curriculum), SB 1441 (which prohibits discrimination on the bases of sexual orientation and gender identity in any state-funded programs), and SB 1471 (preventing state-funded sexual education programs from containing bias, inaccuracies, or religious doctrine).



The Legislative LGBT Caucus is joined by other legislators at the opening of the Pride Month Exhibit honoring the contributions of LGBT Californians.

The caucus supports or prioritizes a number of other bills, including some legislation authored by Senators and Assemblymembers who are not members of the LGBT Caucus. The quantity of significant LGBT rights bills, and the will-

ingness of non-LGBT lawmakers to address these topics, indicates that the Legislative LGBT Caucus is having a measure of success in advocating for the issues affecting LGBT Californians. This ongoing struggle for LGBT rights is as integral to Pride Month as the celebrations and parades, and is the central mission of the Legislative LGBT Caucus.

In 2005, Senator Kuehl served as Legislative LGBT Caucus Chair, an annually-rotating post currently occupied by Assemblymember Goldberg. The official caucus website is: www.assembly.ca.gov/LGBT_Caucus/. ❖



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The newsletter is also available at: www.sen.ca.gov/kuehl

A Sampling of Events in the 23rd Senate District

By Hilda Garcia, Field Representative

HIV & Latinos Leadership Summit

On Friday, June 16th for the first time in Ventura County, healthcare administrators, educators, faith community leaders and county officials gathered to discuss HIV in the Latino community. Those attending the summit discussed a number of cultural and socioeconomic factors that can contribute to the spread of HIV and AIDS in the Latino community.

The summit was called as a response to Ventura County Public Health's 2005 HIV Surveillance Report. The report shows that, while Latinos represent 34 percent of the county's population, 60 percent of new AIDS diagnosed cases last year were among Latinos. Of these cases, 90 percent were diagnosed with HIV and AIDS at the same time, which means that HIV-positive Latinos are not getting the early medical treatment necessary for prolonging and increasing the quality of their lives. This also means they have a greater chance of unknowingly spreading the disease.

The summit touched on many factors that put the Latino population at an increased risk for AIDS. One factor cited is the strength of traditional beliefs that inhibit open communication. Many subjects that should be discussed in order to educate about HIV and AIDS are considered embarrassing or inappropriate. Participants discussed ways to strengthen education within the Latino community in the most appropriate and effective ways.

Agoura Hills Fire Station #89

The Los Angeles County Fire Department opened Fire Station 89 in Agoura Hills Friday, June 16th, with a special dedication ceremony. Nearly 150 residents and dignitaries were there for the festivities.

All five members of the Agoura Hills City Council attended, as well as County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky. A representative from the office of Assemblymember Fran Pavley presented certificates to the fire chief. Tours of the facility were provided.

The \$4 million, 12,000 square foot facility at 29575 Canwood Street, just west of Kanan Road, is the first station

within the city limits of Agoura Hills. The station houses a training classroom, full kitchen, individual dorms for firefighters who work 24-hour shifts, and battalion chief headquarters. Congratulations to the City of Agoura Hills!

Registered Nurses, Healthcare Workers Walk Picket Line for Safe Staffing

SEIU's healthcare workers rallied in West Hills and other areas in the state to fight for better staffing on Wednesday, June 14th. Healthcare workers dressed in medical scrubs walked picket lines in front of three hospitals in Southern California during their lunch breaks. The rally included Registered Nurses; Licensed Vocational Nurses; Certified Nursing Assistants; Technicians, such as Radiology Technologists, Surgical, Emergency Room and Operating Room Technicians; Respiratory Therapists; Dietary Aides; and Environmental Service Workers. These workers are some of 3000 healthcare workers represented by SEIU United Healthcare Workers-West and SEIU 121 RN at West Hills Hospital and Medical Center, Los Robles Hospital and Medical Center, and Riverside Community Hospital.



Senator Kuehl is the author of legislation creating safe nurse-to-patient ratios in California hospitals. The healthcare workers, whose current contract is set to expire on June 30th, 2006, are fighting for safe staffing guidelines for all workers, not just nurses, pensions, quality health plans, fair wage scales, greater job security, and an end to forced overtime. ❖

23rd Senate District. *The 23rd Senate District includes the cities of Agoura Hills, Beverly Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, Malibu, Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Santa Monica, West Hollywood and Westlake Village and the communities of Bel Air, Brentwood, Canoga Park, Encino, Hollywood, Mt. Olympus, Pacific Palisades, Sherman Oaks, Studio City, Tarzana, Topanga, West Los Angeles, West Hills, Westwood and Woodland Hills.*



Las Virgenes Federation Names Margot Feuer Citizen of the Year

by Laura Plotkin, District Director

Beginning in the 1950s and continuing non-stop, Margot Feuer has spent most of a lifetime fighting to preserve and protect the Santa Monica Mountains. She, along with Jill Swift and the late Sue Nelson, worked tirelessly to save some of the wide swaths remaining in the most pristine mountain areas and in order to accomplish this goal, helped to form the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation. As a Sierra Club lobbyist, Ms. Feuer spoke to the Senate National Parks Committee, saying that the Santa Monica Mountains were, "an air shed for an already critically polluted air basin," and "a recreational resource for the millions of urban dwellers in the country's second largest metropolitan area."



Margot's early efforts to protect the environment began when she co-founded a group called Stamp out Smog in the late 1950's. She moved to Malibu in 1965, became involved in local environmental issues there, and was tapped by

the Sierra Club to co-chair a task force to lobby for the national park. She was a founding board member of the Center for Law in the Public Interest and continued to work for the introduction of legislation to create a national park by lobbying Congress in Washington, D.C. in the late 1970's. Success finally came in 1978 with the passage of an omnibus bill by then Chair of the House Subcommittee on Parks, Phil Burton. The bill created a spending ceiling of \$155.5 million for the creation of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA), but it was a start. Over the years, Margot racked up such environmental successes as Malibu Creek State Park, Jordan Ranch and Ahmanson Ranch, and, of course, she had a great deal to feel good about. It was, however, and still is, tough going to actually "buy back the mountains," as much of the area within the SMMNRA footprint is still in private hands--and land prices have done nothing but increase.

Not even a year after Senator Kuehl was elected to the State Assembly in 1994, Margot Feuer paid a visit

to our district office to ask that we try to find a way to acquire the SOKA University property, known also as King Gillette Ranch, former home of the razor baron, as public parkland, and thereby help fill—with public ownership—the center of the SMMNRA that she helped to create. That success finally occurred a full eleven years later, when, at one miraculous moment in time, every elected official at every level of government, individuals and homeowners' organizations, pooled their combined will and their combined finances to make the purchase of the property a reality. Escrow closed on the property on April 16, 2005. That was a gift for us all, but I think it was a special gift for Margot Feuer who fought harder and worked longer for it to happen than anyone. If the SOKA property is the crown jewel of the Santa Monica Mountains, as folks have often said, then Margot Feuer is the crown jewel in the fight to save them. Thank you, Margot, for your 50 years of outstanding work to improve the quality of life in the 23rd State Senate District and the State of California. Congratulations on being named the Las Virgenes Federation's Citizen of the Year! ❖

Photo: Assemblymember Fran Pavley and Laura Plotkin present a Resolution congratulating Margot Feuer on her many accomplishments.

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Tales from Budget Land

*By Keely Martin Bosler, Consultant
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee*

Fourth in a Series

(Keely is the incredibly able staff to the Senate Budget Sub-Committee on Resources, Water, Energy and Utilities, chaired by Senator Kuehl, and here contributes to our ongoing "What I Do At Work" series in these newsletters)



Once upon a time, in a small windowless office in the State Capitol, a consultant toiled away on her very own pieces of the magical and mysterious state budget. While I cannot say my work is actually magical or mysterious, I can say that the work of the Budget and Fiscal Review Committee is not well understood by many,

both inside and outside of the State Capitol. I hope this essay helps to shed some light on what I do in my role as we review and craft the annual budget.

As one of nine consultants to the Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee, I handle all issues and state departments related to natural resources, environmental protection, energy, utilities, and agriculture. My colleagues handle other parts of the budget, including education, and health and human services. Collectively we staff the four Subcommittees of the Budget and Fiscal Review Committee. Senator Kuehl chairs Subcommittee No. 2 on Resources, Environmental Protection, Water and Energy.

My work on any current budget begins on January 10th of each year when the Governor releases his proposed budget. At this time, we set to work reviewing every line of the budget document and the thousands of pages of supporting documentation justifying each budget change (from the last year) proposed by the Governor. The bulk of my time in January and February is consumed with reading, understanding, and distilling these thousands of pages into a long list of follow up questions for each administrative department, as well as issues and recommendations I put together to present to the Senator. We also prepare a detailed overview and summary of the Governor's entire budget proposal.

In March, the Sub-Committee begins three months of weekly Subcommittee hearings. A few weeks before each Subcommittee hearing, I meet with Senator Kuehl to review and get input from the Senator concerning the issues we will be hearing at the identified Subcommittee hearing. I then convene a meeting with each department that includes representatives from the Senate Republican Fiscal Office, the Department of Finance, and the Legislative Analyst's Office. (The Department of Finance is the state control agency charged with constructing the annual budget. The Legislative Analyst's Office is a non-partisan office that makes recommendations to the Legislature on budget and fiscal issues.) I use these meetings to gather additional information on budget proposals and their justification. After this meeting I compile the information I have gathered and write the agenda for the Subcommittee hearing. I may be working on two or even three different sub-committee hearings at the same time, as preparation for each one takes longer than a week.

I spend the bulk of my time formulating my recommendations and writing the agenda for each Subcommittee hearing. Each hearing has an agenda that is anywhere from 30 to 50 pages long and includes an analysis of each budget proposal and a recommendation, agreed to by Senator Kuehl to the

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Senators on the budget sub-committee. When writing the agenda I draw upon all of the information I have read and gathered in various meetings, including meetings with members of the public. I also work closely with Senator Kuehl in formulating recommendations that reflect her positions and views on each issue. While working on Subcommittee agendas I typically work over 60 hours a week. Most work days I spend a lot of my time in meetings and on the phone, so I use time after work and on weekends to write my agendas.

My schedule gets busiest in mid-May when we are completing the work of the Subcommittee and making final decisions on all of the budget proposals. Mid-May

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SB 1491 protects victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking by preventing victim service providers from having to make an untenable choice between receiving critical funding and releasing identifying information that could put their clients at risk.

SB 1491 passed both houses of the Legislature and was signed by the Governor.

SB 1569 – Critical Services for Immigrant Survivors of Human Trafficking

SB 1569, sponsored by the California Immigrant Welfare Collaborative, provides access to critical services for immigrant survivors of human trafficking, domestic violence and other serious crimes, while they are waiting for processing from the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security or the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services.

Under existing law, immigrant victims of human trafficking, domestic violence and other serious crimes have access to most federal and state services, but not until federal certification is complete. During the interim period, victims in critical need do not have access to basic services to protect their health and safety. During this period, victims of these crimes desperately need a safe and appropriate place to live, immediate attention to their physical and mental health needs, and an opportunity to acquire skills so that they can begin to rebuild their lives and participate in the prosecution of their traffickers or perpetrators.

SB 1569 serves as a bridge for these survivors, helping a small number of persons in great need before they transition to existing state or federal services. SB 1569 would treat these survivors like refugees for purposes of determining eligibility for state and local benefits and services, allowing them to access critical medical care, mental health, and basic assistance to help them secure safe housing, food, and supportive services (English as a Second Language programs, job training, etc.).

SB 1569 passed the Assembly Human Services Committee and will be considered by the Assembly Appropriations Committee in August.

SB 1745—Employment Discrimination

SB 1745 declares that it is against the public policy of the state for any person to discharge or harass any individual, or otherwise discriminate or retaliate against any individual, in compensation, or in other terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because the individual is a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

Survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking face severe economic barriers when they attempt to leave those who have victimized them. Because of this, the ability to keep a job is vital to the independence and recovery of victims of these crimes. When victims face the additional obstacle of employment discrimination based solely on their status as a victim, when they are fired or demoted or retaliated against, it can further hinder their efforts to survive the violence. Additionally, the efforts of law enforcement officers to investigate and prosecute these violent crimes are impeded when victims live in fear of adverse employment actions.

Victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking should not be forced to choose between their economic independence and their safety.

SB 1745 passed the Assembly Judiciary Committee and will be considered by the Assembly Appropriations Committee in August.❖

(SB 840 continued from page 3)

their top priority. The California Nurses Association, Health Care for All, the California Physicians Alliance, the California Teachers Association, the California Federation of Teachers, the California School Employees Association, the Latino Issues Forum, the League of Women Voters, the California Association of Retired Americans, and the American Medical Students Association, in concert with many others, are engaged in statewide grassroots activities to pass SB 840 this year.

What you can do:

1. Join forces with this growing grassroots coalition to organize districts whose Assemblymembers are not co-authors of the bill. Specific actions include letter writing campaigns, organizing constituent meetings with your Assemblymember, sponsoring public forums, seeking city, county and school board resolutions in support of the bill, and many others. For more information contact Sara Rogers at sara.rogers@sen.ca.gov.

2. Health Care for All, one of the bills sponsors, is now planning to stage their OneCareNow.org campaign in support of SB 840. Every day, the campaign will feature an event organized in support of SB 840, rotating through the 365 largest towns and cities in California. For further information about SB 840 and the OneCareNow campaign, check websites healthcareforall.org and OneCareNow.org, where you can also sign the petition online or download copies to circulate.

3. Join Senator Kuehl's action alert list for SB 840 by sending an email to Senator.Kuehl@sen.ca.gov with "subscribe SB 840" in the subject heading and your contact information in the email message.❖



The Taft High School Academic Decathlon team was honored by Senator Kuehl and Assemblymember Pavley during a ceremony on the Assembly Floor on June 12, 2006. Taft's Academic Decathlon team earned 51,569 points at the United States Academic Decathlon Championship in San Antonio, Texas, making them the national champions of this prestigious competition.

(BUDGET continued from page 7)

is also when the Governor releases his "May Revision" to the budget, which may entail several new proposals. After the Senators have made all of their final decisions in the Subcommittee, I set to work amending the budget bill. We still amend the budget bill manually. There is no fancy computer system. We literally sift through thousands of pages of amendments drafted by Legislative Counsel to put together an amended budget bill that reflects the actions of the Subcommittee. This takes a lot of time because we often have as many as 2,000 amendments to the budget bill.

After we have amended the budget bill in each house, the Assembly and the Senate, those items upon which the Assembly sub-committee in our issues areas and our Senate sub-committee did not agree are sent to a Conference Committee for reconciliation. I help to write the conference agenda. Before I can do this, however, I work with my counterpart in the Assembly to determine all of the areas where we took different actions. We try to coordinate and discuss issues during the Subcommittee process, but inevitably there are differences that must be worked out in the Budget Conference Committee. During Budget Conference Committee we often work late and on weekends, because when we are not meeting in committee we are busy discussing our staff recommendations with the Senators on the Conference Committee, as well as working out compromise positions with our counterparts in the Assembly. After

Conference Committee, it can be days or weeks before the final budget is voted on. During this time, we work out final language for the trailer bills that accompany the budget bill and make final adjustments to the budget bill. "Trailer bills" enact legislative changes required by the final budget bill decisions.

After the budget bill is passed, our schedules get a little less hectic and all of us in the budget committee are happy for the "break". We spend the next few weeks writing a Final Action Report that serves as a history of all the material contained in the budget bill that was sent to the Governor. We also include information in this document on what the Governor vetoed in the final budget bill that had been passed by the Legislature.

During the rest of session and calendar year I spend the bulk of my days reading and learning more about the subjects that I cover in my assignment. I also spend time getting out of the State Capitol so that I can observe how state government

is actually working. These "site visits" are critical to forming my opinions and perspectives on what is and is not working, which also helps the Senator ascertain whether we need oversight hearings on particular departments or issues.

I hope this helps to shed some light on the not so magical and mysterious state budget process and the role of one consultant that toils dutifully in a small windowless office. ❖

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